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MIDDLE EAST COMMITMENTS

by

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MIDDLE EAST COMMITMENTS

SECRETARY GENERAL Dag Hammarskjöld's recent peace mission to the Middle East has been sufficiently successful to afford a breathing spell in a situation of tension that for weeks threatened to explode into war. Agreements achieved through the perseverance of the head of the United Nations secretariat neither removed fundamental obstacles to a settlement between Israel and the Arab states nor altered the military balance of power in that region. However, they helped to pin down the obligation of those countries to stop the clashes that have exacerbated their relations and made the region a serious danger spot. The resulting calm may be only temporary, but it at least gives opportunity to press the search for solutions that will eliminate dangers of world war from that quarter.

PATTERNS OF POLICY IN THE TROUBLED MIDEAST

Within and outside the Middle East, the governments with a stake there have been re-examining and reappraising their military, economic, and political commitments. Two major lines of diplomatic action and maneuver have emerged within recent weeks:

(1) Under U.N. auspices, efforts were set in motion to work out more effective measures for enforcement of the existing Arab-Israeli truce with the parties directly concerned. They were accompanied by cautious explorations to determine whether negotiations to remove basic obstacles to a permanent settlement could be put under way with any promise of success.

(2) Rival alliances in the area were buttressed or expanded by new accessions: the Baghdad Pact, linking four northern-tier nations with Great Britain, was reinforced by entry of the United States into the work of its permanent committees, although this country still refused to adhere to the treaty. The Cairo-led southern-tier alliance linking Egypt with Syria and Saudi Arabia was expanded to include Yemen, the Arabian kingdom which flanks the British protectorate of Aden at the entrance to the Red Sea.

The big powers outside the region made a series of foreign policy statements that reflected conflicting interests

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and commitments on the one hand, and changing estimates of the situation in the Middle East on the other. Countries of the West narrowed the differences among themselves and strongly supported the U.N. peace moves, but their own divergent commitments made it difficult to agree on a common course of action. The Soviet Union hedged on—but did not withdraw—earlier Communist arms commitments to Egypt; faced with the danger of hostilities in Palestine, it offered to work toward a general arms embargo and to support U.N. efforts to find a peaceful settlement.

COMMUNIST ARMS DELIVERIES AND PEACE PLEDGES

The arms agreement under which Egypt has been obtaining military equipment from Czechoslovakia ended the monopoly of supply in the Middle East previously held by the western powers.¹ By opening a new and potentially large source of military equipment to the Arab states aligned with Egypt, the Soviet Union not only sought to undermine regional security arrangements of the western powers, but also asserted its presence as a great power in the whole area stretching from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. It was clear that Moscow intended henceforth to have a voice in decisions affecting that strategic sphere.

Moscow has been exerting the influence of a great power in the Mideast without either expanding or contracting its military commitments. The original commitments to Egypt have been carried out, and Soviet official spokesmen have continued to justify similar arrangements with other Arab states as commercial transactions. At the same time, the Soviet government seems to have avoided enlarging deliveries of military equipment to the area, and has been vague about future deliveries which would increase the imbalance created by the initial shipments.

Dangers inherent in the Middle East situation were recognized by the Soviet government in a foreign ministry statement issued Apr. 17 upon the departure for London of Premier Bulganin and Communist Party Secretary Khrushchev. The statement said that "The Soviet government considers it is possible and necessary to avoid an armed conflict in the Near East." It pledged the Soviet

¹ See "International Arms Deals," *E.R.R.*, Vol. II 1965, pp. 791-795.

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Union to support United Nations measures "directed toward the search for ways and means of strengthening peace in the area of Palestine, and the implementation of the corresponding decisions of the Security Council."

Veering away from earlier Soviet pronouncements that gave encouragement to the Arab states in their dispute with Israel, Moscow urged both sides to "refrain from any kind of action which might lead to an exacerbation of the situation." It thought it essential that efforts be directed toward "a stable, peaceful settlement of the Palestine question on a mutually acceptable basis, taking due consideration of the national interests of the interested parties."

The talks between the Soviet leaders and British Prime Minister Eden brought reaffirmation of the Russian pledge to help settle the Arab-Israeli dispute through the United Nations, and agreement by the Russians to do "their utmost to put an end to the armaments race in all parts of the world." The Soviet leaders indicated that they might support an embargo on arms shipments to the Mideast, but they made it clear that Communist shipments would stop only if all countries agreed to halt military deliveries. In the joint communique issued at the end of the London talks, Apr. 26, the two governments declared their "firm intention to do everything in their power to facilitate the maintenance of peace and security in the Near and Middle East."

For this purpose they will give the necessary support to the United Nations in its endeavor to strengthen peace in the region of Palestine and to carry out the appropriate decisions of the Security Council. . . .

The governments of the two countries call on the states concerned to take measures to prevent the increase of tension in the area. . . . They will also support the United Nations in an initiative to secure a peaceful settlement on a mutually acceptable basis of the dispute between the Arab states and Israel.

The agreement on general principles was not accompanied by any meeting of minds on how the principles were to be made effective; final statements by the Soviet leaders when they left for home showed that important differences remained. Bulganin declared that western defense agreements were the "main source of international conflict and friction" in the region; he repeated previous Soviet condemnation of "military groupings such as the Baghdad

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Pact," which he said were responsible for deterioration of the situation, and he warned against dangers of "external intervention" or introduction of foreign troops in the Middle East.²

OBLIGATIONS OF THE WEST TO COMBAT AGGRESSION

After the British-Soviet talks, the paramount question for the western powers was whether there had been enough of a shift in Moscow's attitude to give promise of a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute through the United Nations. If the Soviet Union really was turning to a policy of restraint and conciliation, and withdrawing its support of an Egyptian-led bloc avowedly hostile to the existence of Israel as a state, then the danger of open hostilities had been reduced materially. But if the apparent Soviet shift did not represent a genuine change, then in all probability the western powers would be called upon sooner or later to fulfill obligations they had undertaken to intervene in case of aggression.

Under the right of individual or collective self-defense, recognized in Article 51 of the U.N. Charter,³ the western powers have assumed broad obligations to take concerted action, including the use of armed force, to resist aggression in specific areas of the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Three joint undertakings, in particular, embody direct military or political commitments.

Tripartite Declaration of 1950, whereby the United States, Great Britain, and France agreed to "take action both within and outside the United Nations" to prevent any violation of existing frontiers or armistice lines between Israel and the Arab states.

Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty signed Oct. 17, 1951, on the accession of Greece and Turkey, which extended the mutual security guarantees of the treaty to the territories of Turkey in the Near East and to the Mediterranean Sea.

Baghdad Pact, a regional security agreement signed Feb. 24, 1955, by Turkey and Iraq, and subsequently adhered to by Great Britain, Pakistan, and Iran, which obligates the parties to "cooperate for their security and defense." The United States, not a formal member, has supported the aims of the pact and joined two of its working committees.

The three-power declaration of 1950 never had the effect

² The Moscow statement of Apr. 17 employed stronger language in attacking the Baghdad Pact as a "violation of the United Nations Charter" and a "threat to the independence of the peoples of this area."

³ Art. 51 provides that "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations . . ."

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of a binding treaty commitment. Framed as a joint statement of policy by the western foreign ministers at a meeting in London on May 28, 1950, it laid down "fundamental principles" to guide the three governments in their dealings with Israel and the Arab states on questions of arms deliveries and frontier violations.

Reaffirming their opposition to an arms race, the western powers declared they would control their deliveries of military equipment in such a way as to meet the legitimate needs of the countries of the Middle East for "internal security and self-defense" and permit them to play a part in the defense of the area as a whole.⁴ The 1950 declaration included the following specific pledge with respect to the frontiers between Israel and the Arab states:

The three governments . . . [declare] . . . their unalterable opposition to the use of force or threat of force by any of the states in that area. . . . Should they find that any of those states was preparing to violate frontiers or armistice lines, they would . . . immediately take action, both within and outside the United Nations, to prevent such violation.

With tension mounting in the Middle East, differences developed among the three western powers as to the extent of the obligations they had assumed and as to means of preventing resort to force in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Great Britain urged the United States last March to make it clear that the Big Three would stand together in opposing any act of aggression in Palestine, by force if necessary.⁵

Washington undertook to clarify its position in a White House statement, Apr. 9, that placed primary emphasis on action through the United Nations.

The United States, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, will observe its commitments within constitutional means to oppose any aggression in the area.

The United States is likewise determined to support and assist any nation which might be subjected to such aggression . . . [and] . . . is confident that other nations will act similarly in the cause of peace.

By emphasizing American responsibilities under the U.N.

⁴ The 1950 arms policy was designed, in effect, to maintain the existing military balance between Israel and the Arab states. See "International Arms Deals," *E.R.R.*, Vol. II 1955, pp. 795-797.

⁵ Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd told the House of Commons, Mar. 26, that the British government intended to honor "the spirit and the letter" of the 1950 declaration and expected the other governments to do likewise.

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Charter, the White House clearly implied that any decision to take joint military action in the Middle East should be based on identification of the aggressor by the Security Council, which would require concurrence of all the permanent members, including the Soviet Union. The U.S. government gave no indication of what action it might be prepared to take outside the United Nations, if a Soviet veto should prevent a decision by the Council.

By declaring that the United States would observe its commitments "within constitutional means," the White House statement suggested that President Eisenhower did not intend to send American armed forces into action in the Middle East, independently or with the forces of other nations, without the approval of Congress.⁶

BRITISH AND UNITED STATES LINKS TO BAGHDAD PACT

The United States and Great Britain, while sharing a common interest in strengthening the security of the Middle East as a whole, have different commitments in the area. The American government actively encouraged the development of a regional security arrangement among the northern-tier states facing the Soviet Union, but did not itself become a party to the agreement. Britain, on the other hand, was the first country to adhere to the Baghdad Pact after it was promulgated by Turkey and Iraq in February 1955 and opened to accession by other countries.⁷

The British government had special reason to join the Baghdad defense group last year, as Iraq was pressing for termination of the Anglo-Iraqi alliance of 1930 two years in advance of its 1957 expiration date.⁸ Accordingly, at the time that Britain adhered to the Baghdad Pact, it signed a separate agreement with Iraq providing for immediate termination of the 1930 alliance, restoration of Iraqi sovereignty over British military and air bases in that country, and maintenance of "close cooperation" between the two governments.

The Baghdad Pact obligates its members to "cooperate for their security and defense," but the terms of the treaty

⁶ At a news conference on Apr. 4 Eisenhower declared he would never order U.S. forces "into anything that can be interpreted as war, until Congress directs it."

⁷ Britain adhered to the Baghdad Pact on Apr. 4, 1955; Pakistan on Sept. 23, 1955; Iran on Oct. 26, 1955.

⁸ The 1930 alliance was arranged when Britain held a League of Nations mandate over Iraq; although the mandate was terminated in 1932, the alliance was to remain in force for an additional 25 years.

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embody no military commitments comparable to the mutual security guarantees of the North Atlantic alliance.⁹ Such defensive measures as the parties agree to take are to be the subject of special agreements among them. Last November the five member governments established a permanent organization, including a council, a secretariat, and special committees for joint military planning, economic cooperation, and anti-subversion activities.

The United States, while attempting to maintain its policy of "impartial friendship" in the Middle East, has drawn closer to the Baghdad Pact without accepting full membership. Washington was represented at the last meeting of the council, held in Teheran from Apr. 17-19, by an observer group headed by Deputy Under Secretary of State Loy Henderson. During the meeting the United States accepted membership in the economic and anti-subversion committees, agreed to establish a military liaison group headed by a general or an admiral, and undertook to share in the administrative costs of the permanent organization.

MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL COMMITMENTS

The United States has been giving direct military assistance to the four northern-tier countries now members of the Baghdad Pact. Separate mutual defense assistance agreements were concluded with Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan between 1947 and 1954, and military shipments to those countries in fiscal 1955 were valued at \$238 million. In addition, limited amounts of military equipment were made available until recently, under so-called "cash reimbursable agreements," to Israel and three Arab states—Egypt, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia.

Under the cash agreements, purchases of arms may be made either through ordinary commercial channels or from the U.S. government; each agreement specifies that the purchasing government will use the arms only for "purposes of internal security, and for self-defense"; all purchases, whether from private or governmental sources, are subject to export license controls. After the Egyptian arms deal with Czechoslovakia in September 1955, Israel sub-

⁹ Art. 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty stipulates that an armed attack against one of the parties "shall be considered an attack against them all"; each party agrees to take "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force," to restore and maintain security.

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U.S. MILITARY AGREEMENTS IN MIDDLE EAST

	Country	Agreement signed
<i>To grant direct military aid</i>	Turkey	July 12, 1947
	Iran	May 23, 1953
	Iraq	Apr. 21, 1954
	Pakistan	May 19, 1954
<i>To sell military supplies for cash*</i>	Saudi Arabia	June 18, 1951
	Israel	July 1, 1952
	Egypt	Dec. 10, 1952
	Lebanon	Mar. 23, 1953
<i>To maintain air bases</i>	France †	February 1951
	Saudi Arabia	June 18, 1951
	Libya	Sept. 9, 1954

* On issuance of export licenses by United States. † For bases in Morocco; subject to renegotiation with Morocco.

mitted an urgent request to the United States for permission to purchase in this country substantial quantities of military equipment for "legitimate self-defense." However, export licenses to Israel were withheld under a general policy, laid down by President Eisenhower last November, of avoiding action that would "contribute to an arms competition in the Middle East, because such a race would not be in the interests of any of the participants."¹⁰

Certain other countries in the Middle East have been granted American export licenses this year for small shipments of arms previously ordered and paid for under cash reimbursable agreements. Eighteen light reconnaissance tanks were released for export to Saudi Arabia in February; State Department officials explained that the order, placed in April 1955, had been approved by the U.S. government on Aug. 25, and paid for on Nov. 26. Failure of the United States to honor the commitment, according to Under Secretary Hoover, might have had an adverse effect on pending negotiations with Saudi Arabia for renewal of the American air base agreement with that country.¹¹

Other western powers have continued to supply limited amounts of arms to countries of the Middle East within the terms of the 1950 declaration. France, with the approval of the United States, has made small shipments to Israel and currently is reported to be negotiating with that

¹⁰ Statement issued at Denver, Nov. 9, 1955.

¹¹ Signed June 18, 1951, the air base agreement gave the United States use of "facilities and services" at Dhahran airfield near the Persian Gulf for a period of five years.

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country for delivery of an undisclosed number of jet fighter planes. Great Britain has furnished technical aid and equipment to Iraq under its mutual assistance agreement, and has continued to subsidize the Arab Legion in Jordan.

Early this year the British government sought to persuade King Hussein of Jordan to align that country with the Baghdad Pact nations. The British move was countered swiftly by Egypt, which attempted to bring Jordan into the Cairo-led alliance with Syria and Saudi Arabia. King Hussein, trying to maintain an independent position between the rival defense groups, turned down both proposals. However, on Mar. 1 Hussein dismissed Sir John Bagot Glubb, the British officer who had developed the Arab Legion and served for 30 years as chief of staff of the Jordanian army. That unexpected move, apparently made under pressure from nationalist elements in the Arab Legion, not only impaired British prestige but also underscored the tenuous nature of political and military alignments in the Arab world.¹²

Shifting Alignments in the Arab World

THE ARAB WORLD stretches along the southern shores of the Mediterranean eastward across the Nile valley to the Red Sea and over the desert wastes of the Arabian peninsula to the Persian Gulf. It occupies an area of more than three million square miles. The 55 million people who inhabit the region are predominantly Moslems. They regard themselves as a part of the larger Moslem community, numbering around 400 million members, which embraces Turkey on the north and extends across the Indian subcontinent to China and to the populous islands of the East Indies.¹³

For centuries the region inhabited by the Arabs has held great strategic importance as the land bridge linking Europe, Africa, and Asia. It has been a hub of international communications and a center of rivalries among the

¹² Jordan subsequently declined a joint offer from Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia to subsidize the Arab Legion.

¹³ About 98 per cent of the Arab peoples are Moslems; the population of Pakistan is about 95 per cent Moslem; and 90 per cent of Indonesians embrace the Moslem faith.

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great powers. Today it is a region of rich natural resources and poor peoples. It is abundant in oil, manganese, chrome, mica, and other strategic materials vital to modern industrial nations.

The Arabian peninsula and the lands surrounding the Persian Gulf hold more than one-half of the world's proven oil reserves and account for more than 40 per cent of the petroleum moving in international trade. New national governments have replaced older feudal or colonial regimes throughout most of the area, and upsurging nationalist movements are demanding internal reforms to raise standards of living.

RIVAL DEFENSE GROUPS WITHIN THE ARAB SPHERE

Conflicts of interest and ambition among the Arab states themselves have been a major obstacle, not only to the strengthening of peace and security in the Middle East, but also to the attainment of the avowed goal of Arab unity. Territorial, dynastic, and personal rivalries divided the Arab tribes in their long struggle for independence, which began in the 19th century when the whole region still formed a part of the Ottoman Empire. At that stage, Egypt's bid for leadership of the Arab world was contested by the rival Hashemite dynasty in the territories that now form Jordan and Iraq.

In World War I Great Britain held out promises of independence to the Arab chiefs, and on the strength of those promises gained Arab support in the campaign against Turkey, then fighting on the side of Germany and the Central Powers. However, the wartime promises were not immediately fulfilled. The territories of Iraq and Jordan were placed under League of Nations mandates, with Britain as the mandatory power. The Hashemite kings, Faisal and Abdullah, organized new governments which entered into treaties of alliance with the British. Palestine also was placed under a British mandate, while Syria and Lebanon became French mandates under the League of Nations.

In World War II Great Britain sought to promote Arab unity under the leadership of the Hashemite dynasty. The project was sponsored by Nuri al-Said, then as now Prime Minister of Iraq, who proposed a union among the inde-

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pendent Arab states, excluding Egypt. However, King Ibn Saud, the powerful ruler of Saudi Arabia, joined forces with Egypt in opposing any unification under the rival Hashemite clan. Syria and Lebanon, fearing that their newly won independence would be jeopardized in a larger federation, declined to join the union.

At the end of the war, Egypt took the initiative in organizing the Arab League as a unifying force under its own leadership. Britain, having failed to establish Hashemite leadership, supported the Egyptian government then headed by Nahas Pasha. After lengthy negotiations and considerable hesitation on the part of the Arabian states, the Pact of the Arab League was signed at Cairo, Mar. 22, 1945, by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen.¹⁴

The aim of the Arab League was to strengthen Arab unity, to coordinate the policies of the member states, and to bolster their common defense. The organization included a council, composed of the prime ministers of the member states, a number of permanent committees, and a permanent secretariat.

MUTUAL DEFENSE COMMITMENTS IN ARAB LEAGUE

The original Arab League pact contained provisions for a collective security system, although the members were unwilling to accept binding commitments to render military assistance to one another in event of armed aggression. In case of aggression, the state attacked or threatened could request an immediate meeting of the council, which was directed to decide what measures were to be taken to resist the aggression—the decision to be taken by unanimous vote.

The security system of the Arab League proved totally ineffective in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948. When Great Britain terminated its mandate over Palestine on May 15, 1948, and Israel simultaneously proclaimed its independence, the Secretary General of the Arab League sent a telegram to the United Nations announcing the intervention of the League to "restore the territory to the Arabs of Palestine." The formation of an Arab Liberation Army was announced, but in the fighting that followed the separate Arab forces

¹⁴ Libya joined the Arab League in 1953, and the Sudan was admitted on gaining its independence in January 1956.

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were unable to achieve a coordinated plan of action or any kind of unified command.

When the issue of a commander-in-chief for the Arab armies arose, each country claimed the honor. The League council met time after time without reaching a decision. Iraq would not accept an Egyptian general; Egypt would not accept an Iraqi general; neither would accept Jordanian leadership as Jordan's Arab Legion was British-led. The result was that each Arab army fought on its own without any overall coordination.

The defeat of the scattered Arab forces by Israeli troops was a bitter blow to the Arab League, which had vowed to destroy the Jewish state. After the armistice agreements were signed in 1949, the League members undertook to correct weaknesses exposed by the war in a Treaty of Joint Defense which was signed on June 17, 1950.

The new joint defense pact, patterned after the North Atlantic alliance, stipulated that any act of armed aggression made against any one or more of the contracting parties would be considered as an attack directed against them all. Accordingly, the parties agreed "to take immediately, individually and collectively, all means available including the use of armed force to repel the aggression and to restore security and peace."

The treaty provided also for establishment of a joint defense council, composed of the foreign and defense ministers of the member states, and a permanent military commission made up of senior officers from the general staffs of the several armies. However, no provision was made for a unified command, the member countries being still unable to agree on a chief of staff.

EGYPT'S BID FOR LEADERSHIP OF AN ARAB ALLIANCE

Egypt had played a leading role in developing the joint defense pact long before the 1952 revolution, which sent King Farouk into exile and brought to power the revolutionary council headed by Gen. Mohammed Naguib and Lt. Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser. The new nationalist regime, preoccupied with other problems, showed little interest in strengthening Arab security arrangements until 1954, after Nasser had replaced Naguib as premier;¹⁵ then it launched

¹⁵ Naguib was forced to resign as premier and chairman of the revolutionary council in a violent political crisis in March 1954; Nasser took over both offices.

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a bitter assault on Iraq's proposed northern-tier defense pact with Turkey.

In sharp protests to Iraq, Nasser made it plain that Egypt regarded the projected treaty as a direct attack on Egyptian leadership of the Arab League defense pact and a blow at Arab unity. In January 1955, more than a month before the Baghdad Pact was signed, Nasser called a meeting of Arab League premiers in an effort to head off the western-oriented grouping, and to find an alternative approach to regional security problems. At one stage Nasser threatened to have Iraq expelled from the Arab League and the joint defense pact; at another time he warned that Egypt might withdraw from the League pact and organize a new and stronger Arab alliance.

The Egyptian attitude seemed to be influenced by three main factors: (1) Ambitions of the young nationalist regime to reassert Egypt's historic claims to leadership of the Arab world; (2) a conviction that the Arab states must stand united to develop a strong independent position in dealing with the great powers; (3) a fear that Iraq in alliance with Turkey and Great Britain would revive the old project of a federation excluding Egypt.

Egyptian hopes for Arab unity under Cairo's leadership were disappointed when Iraq went ahead and signed the Baghdad Pact. When Britain, Pakistan, and Iran joined that regional security organization, Egypt moved quickly to strengthen its own defenses by arranging for arms purchases in Czechoslovakia. It took steps also to build a new alliance with as many Arab states as would accept its leadership. On Oct. 20, 1955, Egypt concluded a mutual defense treaty with Syria, and one week later it signed a treaty with Saudi Arabia. The terms of the treaties were identical:

The two contracting parties consider any armed attack on the territory or forces of one of them as an attack on them both. Consequently, in the exercise of individual and collective self-defense, they undertake to extend swift assistance to the attacked country and to take immediately all measures, and use all means at their disposal, including armed force, to repel the attack and restore security and peace.

In an apparent reference to Israel and the unsettled Palestine dispute, each contracting country agreed not to conclude "a unilateral peace settlement or any kind of agree-

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ment with the aggressor," without the consent of its allies.

The Cairo alliance established permanent machinery which in some respects duplicated—and in other respects went beyond—the organization of the existing Arab joint defense pact. The new agreements set up a supreme council, composed of the foreign ministers and war ministers of the member states, and created a war council composed of the chiefs of staff. In addition, it made provision for a joint command, headed by a commander-in-chief and a unified staff organization. The latter provision was implemented on Dec. 26, 1955, when Cairo announced the appointment, effective immediately, of a commander-in-chief: Gen Hakim Amer, defense minister of Egypt.

Premier Nasser continued his efforts to extend the links among Arab states. In March 1956, following Jordan's dismissal of Gen. Glubb, the heads of state of Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia met in Cairo at what was described as an Arab "summit conference" to strengthen the power of a unified Arab world. Efforts were made to induce King Hussein to bring Jordan into the Cairo treaty structure, and to break the ties linking Jordan with Great Britain. Although neither effort met with immediate success, Egypt later concluded a separate agreement with Jordan, May 6, providing for the "coordination of the efforts of the two armies in the light of common Arab interests."

The Cairo alliance had been reinforced on Apr. 21 by the signing of a three-power defense pact linking Yemen with Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This treaty had disturbing implications for Aden, the British protectorate which adjoins Yemen on the south at the tip of the Arabian peninsula. The desert boundaries between Yemen and the British protectorate have been in dispute for many years; recently Yemen pressed its claim to control of some 100,000 square miles of territory in the disputed area. British authorities in Aden have agreed to hold talks on the boundary issue, but border raids by Yemen tribesmen have increased tensions since the three-power Arab defense pact was signed.

Leaders of the Arab states appeared to be taken by surprise when the Soviet Union first offered to back the United Nations in seeking a peaceful settlement of the Palestine dispute and later joined Great Britain in calling for urgent measures to end Middle East tensions. The

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Egyptian government, which has been the chief beneficiary of Communist arms support, made no immediate comment on the shift in Soviet policy announced by Moscow on Apr. 17; however, within 48 hours of that announcement Egypt agreed to accept United Nations proposals for an unconditional cease-fire on the frontiers with Israel.

United Nations and Palestine Conflict

THE CEASE-FIRE agreement between Egypt and Israel, announced on Apr. 19 by U.N. Secretary General Hammarskjold, constituted a first step toward enforcing compliance with the four general armistice agreements of 1949 between Israel and the bordering Arab states: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Hammarskjold had been sent to the Middle East, under a resolution unanimously adopted by the Security Council on Apr. 4, on an urgent mission to reduce tensions threatening international peace. He was directed to conduct a survey of various aspects of enforcement and compliance with the 1949 armistice terms, and to "arrange with the parties for the adoption of any measures which . . . he considers would reduce existing tensions along the armistice demarcation lines."

In effect, the cease-fire between Egypt and Israel represented little more than a new truce on the truce line—a promise by the two countries to honor the armistice they had solemnly pledged to observe seven years before. Nevertheless, it was hoped that if the agreement, and those later reached with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, were faithfully carried out, it would be possible to proceed with wider negotiations looking toward general stabilization.

The armistice which Israel and the neighboring Arab states undertook to respect in 1949 specifically prohibited any "warlike or hostile acts" along the 600 miles of demarcation lines established by the agreements. Article 2 of the Egyptian-Israeli General Armistice Agreement provided:

No element of the land, sea, or air military or para-military forces of either party, including non-regular forces, shall commit any warlike or hostile act against the military or para-military forces of the other party, or against civilians in the territory under

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the control of that party; or shall advance beyond or pass over for any purpose whatsoever the demarcation line set forth in Art. 4 of this agreement . . . ; and elsewhere shall not violate the international frontier; or enter into or pass through the air space of the other party, or through the waters within three miles of the coastline of the other party.

The 1949 armistice terms were not imposed by the United Nations, but were the product of direct negotiations conducted under the auspices of Ralph J. Bunche, then serving as mediator for the Security Council.¹⁶ The provisions were framed by the countries themselves. It was declared in the preamble of each agreement that the purpose was "to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine." To supervise the agreements, mixed armistice commissions were established on each frontier, composed of representatives of the two governments concerned, with a neutral chairman appointed by the Chief of Staff of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organization.¹⁷

The area to be occupied by Israel under the armistice agreements was almost one-third larger than that allocated to the Jewish state in the 1947 plan for partition of Palestine.¹⁸ The partition plan, objectionable to the Jews, was totally unacceptable to the Arab states and could not be carried into effect by the United Nations. Consequently, the demarcation lines assigned to each country in the main the territories controlled by its armies when the fighting ceased. The lines were not regarded as permanent boundaries; the task of reaching a final territorial settlement was left for future negotiation.

U.N. EFFORTS TO ENFORCE TRUCE PROVISIONS

The United Nations has been dealing with problems growing out of the Arab-Israeli conflict almost continuously since the armistice agreements were signed. The Security Council has met on the Palestine question more than 90 times since 1949 in efforts to obtain observance of the truce provisions. The General Assembly and other U.N. agencies have attempted to cope with basic political and economic problems left unresolved at the end of the Arab-Israeli war. Numerous proposals have been advanced

¹⁶ See "Israel and the Arab States," *E.R.R.*, Vol. II 1952, pp. 721-737.

¹⁷ Gen. E. L. M. Burns, a Canadian, is the present Chief of Staff.

¹⁸ The partition plan, adopted by the General Assembly Nov. 29, 1947, had called for a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international regime for the city of Jerusalem, all within an economic union.

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in the U.N. and elsewhere for settlement of specific issues.

Despite recurring border incidents, resumption of open warfare was avoided during the first six years of the truce, and some progress was made in the field of economic cooperation. Yet at the beginning of 1956 the prospect of a general settlement of Arab differences with Israel seemed more remote than at any time since 1949.

No Arab nation had recognized the Jewish state, and the Arab boycott of Israel had been intensified. Egypt had denied passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal on the ground that "a state of war" existed between the two countries. The problem of repatriation or relocation of 900,000 Arab refugees from Palestine had grown more acute from year to year. Frontier violence had increased and the task of enforcing compliance with the armistice agreements had become more difficult.

In dealing with frontier violence, the U.N. mixed armistice commissions had little independent authority to police the demarcation lines and were dependent on local agreements which were broken repeatedly by both sides. Numerous incidents were taken to the Security Council, and both sides were repeatedly censured for violations of the truce. The Council censured Israel last year for a particularly flagrant violation of the armistice with Egypt, and recommended urgent measures to strengthen the U.N. Truce Organization.¹⁹

Gen. E. L. M. Burns, Canadian Chief of Staff of the U.N. Truce Organization, attempted to work out agreements between Israel and Egypt for maintenance of joint patrols along sensitive sections of the demarcation lines, for manning of outposts by regular troops, and for local commanders' policing arrangements. Some of those measures were put into effect for a time, but the agreements failed to hold against mounting tension this spring.

SECRETARY GENERAL'S MISSION AND CHANCES FOR PEACE

In an interim report to the U.N. Security Council on May 3, Secretary General Hammarskjöld observed that the new cease-fire agreements between Israel and the surrounding Arab states represented an important advance over

¹⁹ On Mar. 29, 1955, the Council unanimously condemned Israel for a "prearranged" attack on Egyptian positions in the Gaza strip that took the lives of 38 Egyptian soldiers and civilians. See "Middle East Conflicts," *E.R.R.*, Vol. I 1955, pp. 256-263.

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earlier local agreements and constituted "recognition . . . of the obligation to observe a fundamental principle of the Charter." Hammarskjold said:

I wish to draw attention to the difference in character between previous cease-fires, which have been established locally or between military commanders, and a cease-fire of the character envisaged in my negotiations. The cease-fire I have aimed at under my mandate from the Security Council is one governed by a reaffirmation by the governments, given to the United Nations, to comply unconditionally with the fundamental clause of the various armistice agreements, and establishes anew the legal situation on which the armistice regime was to be founded. It furthermore expresses a recognition in this particular situation of the obligation to observe a fundamental principle of the Charter.

Each of the new cease-fire agreements, Hammarskjold conceded, included "a reservation as to self-defense"; however, he added that his negotiations with all of the governments concerned had been "concluded with positive result."

As a further step to assure future compliance with the armistice agreements, the U.N. Secretary General and the Chief of Staff of the U.N. Truce Organization put before the governments new proposals for local arrangements to strengthen the hands of truce-enforcement teams at critical points on the frontiers. Some of those arrangements already had been put into effect; others were still under negotiation.

The initial results achieved by Hammarskjold were praised by Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., chief United States delegate to the United Nations, as "real progress," giving grounds for cautious optimism that a wider settlement would be achieved. Lodge and other observers emphasized, however, that it may be a long way between even a fully effective cease-fire and a real settlement of the Palestine problem.

When the Security Council meets presently to consider the Secretary General's final report, it will have a chance to weigh the possibilities of reaching a broader settlement. In considerable degree the chance of lasting peace will depend on whether the Soviet Union is now willing to work through the United Nations, not merely for a perpetuation of the uneasy truce between Israel and the Arab states, but for a permanent settlement of the territorial and refugee problems which in the past have defied solution.